

IGNITION 14

MATTHEW BROOKS

BRENT CLEVELAND

MARA EAGLE

MUHAMMAD NOUR ELKHAIRY

MALCOLM MCCORMICK

EMILIE MORIN

CLAIRE ELLEN PAQUET

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ADAM SIMMS

UNDINE SOMMER

PROJECTS SELECTED BY TAMMER EL-SHEIKH

AND MICHÈLE THÉRIAULT



MAY 2 – JUNE 2, 2018



Emilie Morin, *Trou (les beaux jours)*, 2016 - . Photo: Dominique Bouchard.

Photo: Dominique Bouchard. Courtesy of the artist.

WAYS OF THINKING

Ways of Thinking is designed for anyone interested in exploring contemporary art and its exhibition framework. It succinctly synthesizes information on the exhibition's concept, the artists and the works featured. For the complete version of *Ways of Thinking*, please see our website: <http://ellengallery.concordia.ca/ways-of-thinking/current/?lang=en>

IGNITION is an annual exhibition that features new work by students currently enrolled in the Studio Arts or Humanities graduate programs at Concordia University. It provides an up and coming generation of artists with a unique opportunity to present ambitious, interdisciplinary works in the professional context of a gallery with a national and international profile. Graduate students work directly with Gallery staff to produce an exhibition that places an emphasis on critical, innovative, and experimental work, engaging in the exploration and consideration of diverse media and practices. **IGNITION** is of interest to all students and faculty, the art community, and the general public.

Projects selected by Tammer El-Sheikh, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Fine Arts, Concordia University, and Michèle Thériault, Director of the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery.

In choosing works for this annual exhibition Michèle Thériault and I considered the artists' words, or descriptions of what they would like to show, and images of past works or works-in-progress that gave us a sense of their respective styles. The proposals were like missives, to which we replied initially with more words: bold, haunting, romantic, incisive, considered, darkly funny or just plain dark.

There was no guiding theme for the exhibition, but connections between the works abound. After imagining the selected projects in the space, I kept circling back to two senses of the word “articulation” as a stand-in for a theme—the linguistic sense of a clear and coherent expression or speaker, and the more spatial sense of a joint, corner or link. Through the articulation of their practices, the selected artists reflect a feature of Concordia's MFA pedagogy—that each takes responsibility in thought and in words for their works. The artists in **IGNITION 14** have done this brilliantly. The second sense is more difficult to explain. By accident, or serendipity, or Michèle Thériault's intuition, or a combination of these, the works were grouped in the gallery to suggest some form of an articulation—a joint, a corner, a link—between nature and culture, surfaces and depths, speaking, writing and fighting, and between thoughts of home and the feeling of being away.

[...]

Commentary by Tammer El-Sheikh, curator invited to participate in the selection of the projects for **IGNITION 14**. The complete text can be read on the Gallery's website in the Ways of Thinking section.

MATTHEW BROOKS

Burger Time, 2017
Bob's Oil Co, 2017
Laundromat, 2018
Digital C-prints
122 x 152 cm each

Courtesy of the artist

In the ongoing series *Scenes from an Untitled Film*, I am interested in the process of translating reality into photographic images and the relationship between the film set and the built environment. Ambiguous narratives are embedded in each tableau, as spaces suggest traces of characters and create a sense of time where action seems to precede or follow the image.

- EXPLORE
- From where do you start to bring a narrative to these photographs? Is it in the foreground? The background? From the camera's standpoint? Or out of frame?
 - The time of the photographs—at dawn, dusk or the middle of the night—do these moments bring to mind particular, ready-made narratives?

BRENT CLEVELAND

Tina, 2018
From the series *Time for Another Day*
Acrylic and oil on canvas

Daydreamer, 2018
From the series *Time for Another Day*
Acrylic on canvas

Lover, 2018
From the series *Time for Another Day*
Acrylic and oil on canvas

Brat, 2018
From the series *Time for Another Day*
Acrylic on canvas
152.4 x 121.92 cm each

Anjelica Huston, Roger Moore, Marsden Hartley, Little Ploop, 2017-2018
Oil and acrylic on board, glitter, fake lashes, earplug and plastic butterflies
20.32 x 15.24 cm each
Courtesy of the artist

I'm drawn to the idea of the portrait and how a singular icon is capable of displacing power hierarchies within the self. I desperately want to create meaningful relationships with the characters of my painting world as their identities become increasingly complex and interesting. Conceptually, these portraits become

stand-ins to convey unresolved tensions within my own understanding of myself, often taking the form of absurd misfits, glamorous monsters, and misunderstood losers.

- EXPLORE
- The thickness of the paint. How the all-over base layer of some works suggests a provisional surface where one portrait can be traced out and wiped away again.
 - Identities and categorization. Think about how you qualify the personality of each portrait. What is at stake when one, for example, is read as cute and another as grotesque?

MARA EAGLE

The Incorporation of Jane Austen, 2018
Performance with chair, desk, lamp, stylus, ink pot, India ink and Mylar

The artist will be on site 12 hours a week during opening hours according to a schedule posted on the Gallery's website each Friday preceding the following week.
Duration of the performance: 120 to 180 min
Courtesy of the artist

Given that graphologists use a person's handwriting to infer character, I wonder will I also begin to take on character traits of Jane Austen as my hand incorporates hers? What connections exist between the body that writes and the creative product of its labour, the body of writing? This project is an invitation to be haunted and transformed through the rehearsal of another's bodily gestures.

- EXPLORE
- The act of corresponding with a writer's work not through its content but the trace and form of the actual writing on the page
 - The work of writing compared to the time taken to read

MUHAMMAD NOUR ELKHAIRY

I would like to visit, 2017
Video on laptop, sound, 3 min.

P is for Palestine, 2018
Video on a LCD screen, colour, sound, 3 min.

Courtesy of the artist

I would like to visit and *P is for Palestine* are part of a series of video character portraits that explore the unstable performance of identity for Palestinians within the diaspora and highlight the colonial legacy brought to bear on the locations in which the works were created, namely Montreal, Canada and Amman, Jordan. The works speak towards global political concerns, pointing to the subjective experiences of the characters in order to foreground that the personal is always political.

- EXPLORE
- How both works establish a base vocabulary on Palestine and how the speaker or writer brings variation and repetition to this.
 - How does El-Khairy convey a sense of interruption, exception, or exteriority? Conversely, how is a sense of place invoked?

MALCOLM McCORMICK

While You Were Gone, 2017-2018
Wood, fabric, paintings and base
Video projection, 20 min.
Courtesy of the artist

While You Were Gone is an immersive installation that combines architecture, painting, and moving image to address themes of time, space, absence, and the act of looking in the digital age. The title draws on the definition of “abstract” as an act of extraction or removal and is meant as a reflection on the role of abstract art during times of crisis.

- EXPLORE
- Distraction and abstraction. Does the installation force a comparison between the experience of screen-based and gallery-situated viewing or are the

- lines blurred?
- Variation and association. Consider the variations available through abstract painting and the associations guided by search engines and algorithms.

EMILIE MORIN

Trou (les beaux jours), 2016 -
Skype call performance upon appointment, approximate duration 8 min.
Artistic director and performer: Emilie Morin
Choreography: Manuel Roque

Courtesy of the artist

You must make an appointment to experience the work. You may do so in person at the reception desk or by email: binaellengallery@gmail.com

Trou (les beaux jours) is a dance piece watched through a Skype call. For Ignition, the performance is an eight-minute call between one viewer and myself at a time. I am curious to see if and what kind of shared intimacy can unfold between two strangers at a distance for such a short duration during which contact is connected and separated by a screen. What sort of communication can dance build with Skype?

- EXPLORE
- Your body. How does the act of viewing a dance piece while seated in an office chair differ from the experience seated in a theater or other performance space?
 - The framing. How the performance works with, occupies or troubles familiar views available through a Skype conversation.

CLAIRE ELLEN PAQUET

Chapter VII, 2017
Paper, tarred twine, excerpt from Charles Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872)

Courtesy of the artist

Words can roll (off the tongue), be drenched (in meaning), weave (in and out of legibility), or be cut (and pasted). Text is material capable of encapsulating and transmitting feeling. *Chapter VII* repurposes existing text, treating it as an object to be recast in a new material form. This object-text creates an opportunity for conversation with the viewer's body and alludes to the (in)discernibility of negative emotions.

- EXPLORE
- How the text as an object requires you to combine the act of reading with movement around the work.
 - And how through this way of reading the apprehension of the text's content—a distanced, empirical study of emotion—drifts from fact to feeling.

ETTA SANDRY

(45.544728, -73.632496), 2017
Hand-woven cotton, maple and sound
68.58 x 48.26 x 157.48 cm

The only thing I think I know for sure (Sunrise), 2017
Colored pencil on graph paper
83.82 x 91.44 cm

The only thing I think I know for sure (Sunset), 2017
Colored pencil on graph paper
83.82 x 91.44 cm
Courtesy of the artist

The only thing I think I know for sure tracks the sunrise and sunset times in four places I've called home. Through these drawings, I attempt to locate myself by comparing a seemingly constant factor: the rise and fall of the sun. In (45.544728, -73.632496) I translate Montreal's time series data into weaving and sound. This inquiry opens up broader questions about place, home, imagined futures, and patterns of time and movement on personal and global scales.

- EXPLORE
- The grid as an organizing structure shared between the graph paper and the woven cloth.
 - Means of recording and recalling that do not result in a facsimile.

ADAM SIMMS

Driftwood, 2017
Wood, fishing wire, electronic box, Wi-Fi
25.4 x 177.8 cm
Courtesy of the artist

I reclaimed the driftwood from the Atlantic Ocean while traveling to a resettled community off the coast of Newfoundland. Its dislocation and recontextualization in a gallery space are analogous to the forced migration of the Resettlement Acts implemented after the province joined Canada in 1949. Real-time data collected from a buoy introduces an intimate experience of presence that challenges the presumption that resettled communities have no great future.

- EXPLORE
- How movement or animatedness links an object to its original environment.
 - What is suggested in the comparison of locality as encountered in a gallery space and as something experienced within a community?

UNDINE SOMMER

Riding Home, 2018
HD video, colour, sound, 16:9, 3 min. 26 sec.

Courtesy of the artist

The artist thanks Iso E. Setel and Douglas Moffat for their assistance.

What you see in the image is an uneventful ride through a forest at dawn, but what you see through the text is the remembrance of a lecture by Ariella Azoulay on the mass rape of German women after WWII, an encounter with a psychotherapist, a woman locking the doors of her home. Text and image here become mutually constitutive, confusing and rearticulating the relation between vision and speech, poetics and images.

- EXPLORE
- At what points does the text narrate the video? When is it at a distance from what is seen? What feelings are stirred when both line up? Or when the video image becomes the background to recollection?
 - Could the in-between moment of the early morning leave the imagery more susceptible or open to the influence of the text?

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